

5 August 1975

TALKING POINTS ON THE ALERT MEMORANDUM PROCESS

About a year ago we decided that improvements were needed in procedures for alerting senior US policymakers to potential problems that might soon confront him. We needed to establish a system for communicating information and analysis on world events which--if they unfolded in certain ways--would importantly impact on US interests or require a US response, or both.

It was our view that if such information appeared only in routine publications the policymaker might not have his attention sufficiently directed to the more ominous situations. Moreover, the process must provide enough time for the US Government to attempt to ward off the threatening event (crisis avoidance) or failing that, to prepare to cope with it (crisis management).

To fill this need a new reporting vehicle--the Alert Memorandum-- was developed. It was designed as a community system to signal the potential dangers of an unfolding situation as early as possible in the unfolding process.

CLASSIFIED BY [redacted]
EXEMPT FROM GDS ON
SECURITY OF INFORMATION EXTENSION CATEGORY:
§ 201.6(a)(1) (one or more)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON
Impossible to determine
(unless impossible, insert date or event)

80M01133A000800060014-0

SECRET

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During the past year, fifteen Alert Memoranda have been issued. The topics covered include events in Portugal, the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia. (Note to DCI: (A list with exact titles is appended.)

The threatening event did not always take place, of course, because it is always easier to recognize a potentially dangerous situation than to accurately forecast specific ways in which it might develop. In our selection of topics for coverage by Alert Memoranda, we must carefully balance importance and probability. An event of extreme significance--the possibility of renewed Middle East fighting, for example--would be the subject of an alert at a relatively early point if the likelihood were seen to be going up at all. On the other hand, an event of lesser national significance might require a very high probability of occurring before we would use the Alert Memorandum process.

Now let me turn to two specific recent examples of Alert Memorandum actually issued. One covers the steadily worsening situation in Portugal, as seen on 18 July of this year. The other covers the implications of Egypt's threatened action to ask for removal of United Nations forces in the Sinai. (Note to DCI: Briefs of the production process are attached, with talking points identified.)

SECRET

In a few cases, also, our alert generated diplomatic action by the US which led to the non-happening of the event - e.g. the 4 Apr 75 one, I believe + maybe one of the Cyprus ones -

MEMORANDUM FOR: Barbara

Mr. Colby has asked the IC Staff to do a study on Alert Memoranda. We are well along, but there is one question I would like to put to Mr. Colby. That is, did any of the Alert Memoranda generated so far result in any phone calls or other form of consultation among the principals?

I am in my office most of the time, and you can call me if Mr. Colby has a chance to take five minutes on this. Or you can relay his answer to me via phone, if that is more convenient.

[Redacted]
R [Redacted], R1982

[Redacted]

DATE

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FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

Routing Slip

TO:

		ACTION	INFO.			ACTION	INFO.
1	DCI			11	IC		
2	DDCI			12	IG		
3	S/MC			13	Compt		
4	DDS&T			14	Asst/DCI		
5	DDI			15	AO/DCI		
6	DDM&S			16	Ex/Sec		
7	DDO			17			
8	D/DCI/IC	✓		18			
9	D/DCI/NIO			19			
10	GC			20			

SUSPENSE

Date

Remarks:

Good review -
What is the proper
dissem of an ARM?
Has the ARM affected
our IC alert posture,
ie generated collection
or production?

DCI/DCI

9/10/80